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PANBABYLONIANISM

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In the year 1794 Charles François Dupuis brought out his *Origine de tous les cultes, ou religion universelle*, a work that made a great stir in its day. His object, he explains, was not to express his own religious views, but simply to describe the opinions of the ancients.¹ The religion of antiquity he represents as the recognition of the divinity of the universe, the heavenly bodies playing the chief rôle; all ancient cosmogonies, with heaven and earth, all the apparatus of religion (ritual, processions, images), and all myths were derived from sun, moon, planets, and constellations. The beast-forms and plant-forms of the Egyptian deities, for example, were copied from the constellations into which men had divided the starry sky; the zodiac was associated with the sun as a cause of mundane phenomena, and the division of the sky into twelve parts gave vogue and sacredness to the number twelve among Egyptians, Hebrews, and Greeks; the sun was the chief god—it was called the right eye of the world, and the moon the left eye; from the victory of the sun over darkness and winter sprang the idea of a Restorer of the world, a Saviour. He remarks also that the ancient Chaldeans were distinguished for their achievements in astronomy, and that from them the knowledge of these sciences was carried to the West.² They taught that the heavenly bodies controlled mundane destinies, and, according to Diodorus, that the planets were the interpreters of the will of the gods.

Dupuis's description thus involves the two points that in the ancient world there was a single religion, and that the ideas and

¹ He drew his material from all the sources available in his day—from Chaeremon, Plutarch, and Macrobius, from Athanasius Kircher, Contant d'Orville, and others; he cites Anquetil's translation of the Avesta, but does not mention Sanskrit.

² He regards Egypt, however, as the leader of ancient civilization.

forms of this religion were all taken from nature and particularly from the heavenly bodies. A revised edition of his work appeared in 1834, but not long after this date fresh discoveries turned the attention of scholars to other points in religious history, and Dupuis was almost forgotten. The study of Sanskrit revived the pursuit of solar myths, an investigation that held supremacy for a time and then gave way to the attempt to find the origin of myths in the conditions of savage life. In all these inquiries was visible the purpose to discover unity in the religions of antiquity.

It was not unnatural that fresh attempts to establish such unity should be suggested by the recent great enlargements of our knowledge of the religions of Egypt and Babylonia. In the learned world these two lands became rival claimants for the position of leadership, and in particular the origin of Old Testament customs and ideas was often referred to one or the other of them. We are not concerned here to follow the arguments of the rival schools, but we may note the work of Eduard Stucken, which paved the way for a serious attempt in our own day to make Babylonia a prime centre of all ancient religious thought.³ In the title of his volumes he announced a study of the astral myths of the Hebrews, the Babylonians, and the Egyptians,⁴ but his comparisons include India, Persia, Greece, China, Japan, Finland, the Slavic and Teutonic peoples, Polynesia, and America. In the course of his investigation he came to the conclusion that all sagas of all peoples go back to the creation-myth (p. 190), which passed, not in its original form but with local variations, to all lands. He adds—and this is a characteristic feature of his theory—that it was not the individual forms or types of sagas that thus migrated, but the motifs; a type, he says, is variable, a motif is often wonderfully persistent. In a given story, which appears in many places, the central personage may be man or woman, friend or enemy, while the kernel of the story remains

³ A similar attempt at unification is Professor Jensen's derivation of all ancient myths from the Babylonian Gilgamesh story.

⁴ *Astralmythen der Hebraeer, Babylonier und Aegypter*. The five parts, devoted respectively to Abraham, Lot, Esau, Jacob, Moses, appeared 1896–1907.

unchanged. He seeks, therefore, to identify situations rather than persons, and so far as this point is concerned he is right. He is convinced that similarities in myths, however far apart in space their loci, are to be explained only as due to transmission; he denies the possibility of independent origination in various places. In proof of his identifications he offers only collocation of stories, whence the identity, he holds, is obvious. The narratives concerning Abraham, for example, are traced by him to two Babylonian myths, the Etana saga and the descent of Ishtar to the underworld. In the former he recognizes four motifs: that of the wild ox (the snake, complaining of the eagle to the sun-god, is advised to hide in the carcass of a wild ox to which the eagle will fly down); that of the plant of delivery (Etana asks for the plant to assist his wife's delivery); the "see, my friend" motif (to Etana, carried up to heaven by the eagle, the earth far below looks like a garden); the fourth motif is too obscure to be usable. The analogies with the material in Genesis are the following: to Lot (Gen. 13) the Jordan valley looks like the garden of Yahweh; Sarai is sterile; in Gen. 15 birds of prey come down on carcasses; compare the sterility of Samson's mother, and the carcass of the lion in Judg. 14. Light, he adds, is thrown also on Deut. 32 11-13 and Isa. 14 12-14. Passing now to Ishtar, the rôle of the goddess is taken by Sarai, by Rebecca, and by Tamar: Sarai's descent into Egypt, like Ishtar's descent into the underworld, is followed by sterility; Rebecca and Tamar, like Ishtar, receive jewels and other adornments; Tamar, like Ishtar, is fatal to her lovers. Other comparisons are produced to show that Abraham, who is Tammuz-Adonis (that is, the spouse of Sarai-Ishtar), corresponds to Osiris-Orion; it is added that the identity of Samson with Orion is obvious. The other Biblical figures are treated in the same way. Their histories are held to embody motifs found all over the world and derived from the heavenly bodies; the histories are mythical in form, but Stucken does not say whether or not he regards Abraham and the rest as historical characters. He has in common with Dupuis the view of the unity of ancient religion and the theory of the astral origin of myths, but he treats the latter point at greater length, and, as is remarked above, defines

myths by their motifs. Apart from his theory his collection of mythical material is interesting.

Stucken's work attracted the attention of Hugo Winckler (whose pupil Stucken was) and its main features were adopted by him. In Winckler's hands, however, the investigation has received wider scope and a more definite theoretical form; "pan-babylonianism" he represents as a system of thought with its rules and methods universally known and applied to the treatment of history. His positions have been adopted (with the exception of a few minor points) by the Lutheran pastor Alfred Jeremias, who has applied it in detail to the early Hebrew religion. Jeremias prefers to treat the material under the designation "ancient Oriental lore" instead of "panbabylonianism"; the reasons for this change will appear below.

The theory, as elaborated by Winckler and Jeremias, may be stated as follows: In the ancient Oriental world there existed one conception of the world, that is to say, one religion, which, having its roots in the beginnings of human society, had been developed through many generations till it appears fully formed in the great civilizations. Essentially one (Winckler calls it "the system"), it took different shapes in different lands, expressing the fundamental ideas under forms determined by the conditions of the various nations. Examination of most ancient religions, it is said, reveals the fact that the astral content of their myths is not in accord with their general grade of culture, their forms of worship, and their conceptions of gods and of the world. It follows that their astral lore was borrowed, and its source must have been Babylonia. For it was in Babylonia that the universal system found its closest expression, and for this reason it may be called "panbabylonianism." It was an astral system: it conceived that the starry sky was the revelation of the will of the gods, the book in which their designs were written; the stars were regarded not as gods but as the abodes and manifestations of gods. Babylonia was the home of astronomy and astrology, the centre, therefore, of this ancient religion. It was in Babylonia that the observation of the heavenly bodies was most carefully carried on and its results formulated with most precision; and in historical times the scientific Babylonian astronomy passed

to other countries, and the Babylonian religious ideas became predominant—that is to say, Babylon became the expounder of the one great Oriental system of the world.⁵ This system sought to explain the origin of things, to trace the history of the world from its emergence out of a chaos to its present form and into the future to the time of renewal. It is identical with religion, has the form of latent monotheism, and is characterized by the expectation of a saviour of divine origin, who in the course of the aeons will overcome the powers of darkness. There are indications that the diffusion of this system through the entire world occurred in the Taurus period, which began with the time of Sargon I and Naramsin, about 3000 B.C.

The theory thus assumes the existence, in historical times, of a well-defined “system,” astral in character, prevalent in all the great nations, the basis and explanation of all the religious ideas and customs of the ancient world. It is admitted by the expounders of the theory that certain customs attach themselves to mundane phenomena (darkness and light, heat and cold, summer and winter, sowing and reaping), particularly in the Canaanite communities, but these phenomena, it is held, are regarded as dependent on astral conditions. In this scheme there is an obvious element of truth. The initial assumption of similarity among the ancient religions has long been recognized as borne out by investigation. Customs (such as festivals, sacrifices, prayers), apparatus of worship (priests and temples), spirits and deities, myths and legends, are everywhere constructed after the same pattern. The modes of approaching and propitiating the supernatural powers are copied from the modes of approaching human potentates, and the divine powers themselves are endowed with the intellectual and moral qualities of their worshippers; and as men are everywhere psychologically the same, and their general social organization is the same, therefore their religious conceptions do not differ materially. This identity exists not only in the religions of civilized peoples, but also in savage communities; here, too, it results from

⁵ “Babylon” is taken by Jeremias to mean the historical Semitic civilization of the Euphrates valley, without reference to the question whether or not it was preceded and influenced by a non-semitic (Sumerian) civilization.

the sameness of human organization, which arises from the psychological unity of the human race. In this sense it may be said that there was only one religion in the ancient world.

It is also generally recognized that the heavenly bodies have played a great part in religious life. With the exception of certain of the lowest tribes that regard them merely as curious facts to be accounted for, the mass of peoples have looked on these bodies either as gods or as the abodes of gods; revered as in themselves powerful or as the seats of powerful beings, they have been held to stand in some relation to human life. Unusual occurrences and appearances in the sky (notably eclipses and comets) have been regarded as signs of some disturbance among the gods or of anger on their part. Such things were matters of common observation, and it was inevitable that explanations of them should be worked out. Astronomical observations began early in the history of man, and have been carried on continuously to the present time. Explanations of astral phenomena at first took the form of imaginary stories, and later were merely records of fact. It is doubtless true, as Winckler says, that Babylonia was the home of what may be called the scientific astronomy of the ancients down to the time when the East succumbed to the West; the developed astronomical systems of India and China (and later of the Moslems) appear to have been derived from the Babylonian. How it came to pass that this study was especially pursued in Babylonia it may not be possible to explain, nor is an explanation necessary for the purposes of the panbabylonian theory; it is enough that such was the fact. Astrology naturally followed the fortunes of astronomy; the formulated interpretation of astral phenomena was dependent on an exact knowledge of them.

So far the theory under consideration does not differ from the commonly received view. But, starting from the facts mentioned above—the similarity of the ancient religions and the religious importance of the heavenly bodies, its authors go on to affirm that all religious myths and customs are related to astral phenomena. They begin with some relatively simple propositions. Religion and the conception of the world, it is said, are for the

ancient Oriental one. The gods, who govern the world, are held to incarnate and reveal themselves chiefly in the stars, which thus become the book in which all human history may be read. Necessarily there is harmony in the world; the same law governs heaven and earth; every earthly place has its correspondent in heaven.

In these propositions, again, we have to recognize an element of truth, but also an extreme of generalization that may be misleading. Religion, in its content of thought and custom, may be said to be identical with the conception of the world, provided this conception includes the whole of the world and all that is involved in the relation between the human and the divine. In the earliest form of religion, says Jeremias, are found these three elements: a tendency toward monotheism, the belief in the control of man by gods, and the belief in continued existence after death. Without pausing to inquire into the precise nature of these early conceptions, which would carry us too far, we may accept the general statement that in fact, not only for the Oriental but also for all others, religion was coextensive with the theory of the world. But there is no evidence that these fundamental convictions were connected especially with astral phenomena, and in fact both Winckler and Jeremias confine themselves to the attempt to demonstrate astral influence in the formation of myths and in the external organization of religion. The other proposition stated above, that heaven is a copy of earth, embodies a very old conception. All savage tribes regard the arrangements in the sky as similar to those on earth: the landscape in the other world is like that of this world; the gods have their family life, their places of abode, and their occupation, like those of men; no other scheme is or has been conceivable to men not scientifically trained; the framework of religion has always been anthropocentric and anthropomorphic.

According to Winckler, as is observed above, the "one religion" of the ancient world had its roots in the beginning of human society; it was in the prehistoric period that the germs were planted whence later sprang the developed cults of ancient life. If this be so (and it amounts simply to saying that all early communities had religious conceptions), then there is no need of the

supposition of borrowing. Every people, possessing certain fundamental ideas, would work them out in accordance with its gifts and surroundings, and there would result a general substantial unity with local differences, just such a picture as we actually have in the ancient world. Jeremias, however, apparently aware of this difficulty, lays stress on the assertion that the borrowing contemplated by astralism has reference to the great civilized nations only. In this case it is incumbent on him to show that not only the astronomical and astrological systems of the outlying nation, but also their mythologies and their dominant religious customs and ideas, were taken from Babylonia; and this is nowhere shown. Stucken maintains a thorough-going theory of borrowing.⁶ He sets aside lightly the difficulty of supposing that there has been a transmission of ideas to remote savage regions; "we will be bold enough," he declares, "to affirm distinctly that myths have migrated not over a limited district only but over the whole earth." Here again, without affirming or denying, we ask for proof. The general conclusion from recent decisions of migration of myths is that when a myth may be explained naturally as arising from local conditions, it is to be regarded as native unless there is documentary evidence to the contrary. Borrowing may be inferred when similarities are too minute and numerous to admit of independent origination.

In proof of his astral scheme Winckler cites the sacredness of certain numbers. Number, he says,⁷ like every phenomenon of the material and spiritual world, is (in the Oriental view) an outflow of divine activity, and therefore prescribed in heaven and thence transferred to earth, and the doctrine of numbers, mathematics, likewise is a part of the science revealed in the heavens and communicated to humanity by a divinely directed tradition; but the preference for certain numbers is not original; it is a survival or relic of the "ancient Oriental lore," which teaches the sacredness of all numbers, and finds them in the heavens and in the organization of the universe; the choice of a particular number by a people depends on the local and temporal conditions of the people; no number has in itself any claim to sacredness,

⁶ *Astralmythen*, pp. 189 f.

⁷ *Himmels- und Weltenbild der Babylonier*, pp. 13 ff.

for the existence of "sacred" numbers is not due to any superstitious idea, but goes back to the old Babylonian science of the division of the heavens; and where a number, not appearing as sacred in Babylonian texts, is sacred in some other country (as nine among the Persians, Scandinavians, Romans, and Arabians), this country, nevertheless, has borrowed it from Babylonia, it has not arisen from universal human views or feelings. So far Winckler, whose contention that no number is in itself sacred may be accepted as obviously true. But whether, or how far, the recognition of sacred numbers in general and of our sacred numbers in particular is due to ancient Oriental lore as expounded in Babylonia is not clear. Certain standard numbers are connected with astronomical observation. Twelve, the number of new moons in the year, appears as a round number among the Israelites and the Greeks; it comes from simple observation and may have been widely employed, but it might easily have been adopted independently by different communities, and does not necessarily imply the existence of an Oriental "system."

The seven-day week has often been referred to the number of the moving heavenly bodies (sun, moon, and five planets); but this is by no means clear, since a substantial division of the month into four parts is found in communities (for example, the Hawaiians) who cannot be shown to have had any relation with Babylonia, or any astronomical knowledge beyond that derived from the simplest observation. The year and the day are fixed by the sun, the month is fixed by the moon; the number of months in the year by the sun and moon, and the moon's phases give about four seven-day weeks. All this calls for no great astronomical knowledge. The derivation of the five-standard from man's five fingers (and of the decimal system from twice five) seems to the panbabylonianists incompatible with the dignity of astronomy and religion—but why not accept as a wonderful thing the development of human science from crude observations to broad and organized knowledge? The origin of the Babylonian sexagesimal system, which has been so widely adopted, is doubtful. The simplest explanation would be that the number sixty was obtained by doubling the number of days in the month, and was adopted because of its convenience; it

contained the numbers three, four, five, ten, and twelve, but lent itself readily to arithmetical computations. However, it was not properly a sacred number, and does not concern us here. As for the number three, it is involved in so many natural human relations and ideas (beginning, middle, end; father, mother, child; sky, earth, sea, etc.) that its employment in religious construction calls for no astronomical explanation; and in regard to the panbabylonian theory it is to be observed that this number is more prominent and important in the Egyptian theistic system than in the Babylonian. Further, all these numbers appear to have been originally used for convenience in reckoning time and in other computations; that is, they were at first secular, and became religious or sacred only when they were brought into connection with religious ideas. Thus the number twelve, which had at first merely a chronological and astronomical significance (the months of the year, the signs of the zodiac), was at a relatively late period, in the time of literary construction, adopted by the Israelites as the number of their tribes (and the number of the sons of Jacob), though as a matter of fact this number cannot be made out from the Israelite history. The number seven becomes religiously prominent only in the later Biblical writings (the seven-branched candelabrum, the seventy years of exile, the seven times seven of the year of jubilee, the seventy year-weeks of Daniel, the seven lamps and the seven seals of the New Testament Apocalypse).⁸ The same thing is true of the number four, which is given by the natural directions in space. Religious ideas were formed from ordinary human thought, independently of numbers, and these latter were incorporated in the systems in periods of scientific construction.

The great religious festivals of the ancient civilized world are arranged with reference to the seasons, including the beginning of the month and the beginning of the year; a few in relatively late times, like the Jewish feast of dedication, commemorate events in national history, those of the earlier time relate to the ordinary social life. The festivals of spring, summer,

⁸ The Zoroastrian septad appears in the Avesta and may be very early; it is, however, not $2+5$ (sun, moon, and five planets), but $1+6$, which is not an astral combination.

autumn, and winter correspond to the most important agricultural periods, and also to important positions of the sun; the festivals of new moon and new year depend on positions of the moon and the sun. Omitting these last (which are based on simple observations requiring no scientific knowledge and no borrowing from Babylonia or other place), we have the two familiar explanations of origin, the astral and the agricultural. The arguments for the latter are given in many recent works, as those of Tylor, Frazer, and others, and cannot be detailed here; the arguments for the former are given in the various expositions of the general astral theory. As there are no explanations of the origin of customs in the records of remote antiquity preserved to us, we are dependent, for a solution of the question at issue, on the indications furnished by a comparison of usages the world over, including the customs of the earliest stages of civilization. A certain relation to the seasons is so clearly visible in many festivals (in Palestine, Rome, China, and elsewhere) that it is recognized by advocates of the astral theory, with the remark that the seasons are dependent on the heavenly bodies, to whose movements the origin of these observances must go back, though their astral origin may be forgotten by the peoples who still maintain the festivals. In many cases, as is remarked above, the astral and agricultural motives exist together in civilized times. The midwinter festival commemorates the lowest heating-power of the sun and also the productive decline or the deadness of the soil. The mythical representation of this fact is the descent of a deity (as Tammuz or Proserpine) to the lower world, and the deity is now variously interpreted as representing the sun or the spirit of vegetation. It is the latter character that is indicated by the simplest winter festivals with which we are acquainted, those, namely, that have survived in European popular customs;⁹ here the conception is mundane, and the spirit may easily be regarded as the kernel or forerunner of the developed god. The conception of the astral character of the winter situation is later in the progress of thought. This posteriority is involved in the account of Tammuz¹⁰ given by Jeremias.

⁹ Described by Mannhardt and Frazer.

¹⁰ *Das Alte Testament im Lichte des Alten Orients*, 1904, pp. 114 ff.

"Tammuz," he says, "stands for the double life of nature (Marduk and Nebo) . . . he represents the revolution of nature, sinking into the underworld and rising to new life, and as such he may bear the character of sun, moon, or Venus (Attar, Lucifer, Phosphoros), combining with this also the phenomena of Marduk (the light half) and Nebo (the dark half), or, more exactly, of Ninib and Nergal." This portraiture of the elastic Tammuz as the representative of the course of nature suggests that the god was originally not astral but agricultural, and therefore that his essential character was formed prior to the rise of Babylonian astronomy. What is true of Tammuz may be said also of Osiris. To those two gods correspond the goddesses Ishtar and Isis. In the complete myth each of these couples (the male deity and the female) sets forth the decline and restoration of the world of nature; and in the Babylonian poem, "the Descent of Ishtar to the Underworld," the consequences of the withdrawal of the goddess from the upper world go beyond crops and winter cold and include the marriage-relation and the perpetuation of human beings and the lower animals—a fact that is satisfactorily explained by the character of the goddess as the patron of fertility.

A point in ancient religion not discussed by Winckler and Jeremias is the recognition of unlucky days and seasons—days and seasons on which it was unfortunate and forbidden to engage in certain ordinary occupations. Some lists of such days are given in Babylonian and Egyptian documents.¹¹ The developed theory was that for some reason the supernatural powers were angry or unfavorable during these periods, and that therefore it was the part of prudence to refrain from work at such times. They were essentially periods of restriction. The origin of many of them lies far back in prehistoric times, so that it is not now possible to explain with certainty the conditions under which a particular day was set apart as taboo. But some late instances may give a clue to the beginnings of the custom. In Hawaii the ground was economic; it was forbidden to catch certain fish

¹¹ For the Babylonian see Jastrow, *Religion of Babylonia and Assyria*, pp. 373 ff.; for the Egyptian, Maspero, *Études égyptiennes*, i. pp. 28 ff., Wiedemann, *Religion of the Ancient Egyptians*, chap. 10.

at certain times; the motive is the same as in the modern restrictions on hunting and fishing. In Borneo also there is an economic reason for restriction; work in harvesting is regulated by law, and on certain days is unlawful. Other grounds doubtless existed in other cases, as, for example, the fact that a great calamity had occurred on a certain day. The known cases suggest that the reasons determining this sort of legislation were generally mundane; there is no ground for supposing that they were connected with a theory of the heavenly bodies further than the primitive observation of the relation between the agricultural seasons and the sun, and the widely diffused belief in the influence of the moon on vegetable and animal life. This latter belief appears to be a generalization from some supposed experience. The moon does not figure in the myths that relate to the decay and revival of vegetation. The supposed relation between her waxing and waning and vital laws may well be considered to be a naïve fancy, and her connection with lunacy may have been originally hygienic in origin. In any case no astral theory is here visible. The seventh-day sabbath was doubtless originally connected with the moon's phases, but only as a result of primitive unscientific observation.¹² It represents an organization of taboo periods. Such periods (as appears in the Egyptian scheme) were at one time scattered throughout the month; convenience, probably, suggested their consolidation, as in New England the various fast-days (originally times of restriction or taboo) were consolidated in one day. The method of consolidation naturally followed the division of the month by the phases of the moon into four parts. In Hawaii there were four periods of restriction in every month. In Yoruba there is a monthly day of rest, that is, of cessation from work. In a Babylonian inscription there is a trace, in one of the months, of a seven-day recurrence of prohibition of certain occupations. The Israelite advance in organization consisted in making every seventh day a period of abstinence from ordinary work, counting the days continuously without reference to the moon;¹³ the

¹² See my article in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol. xviii, 1899, pp. 190 ff.

¹³ But new-moon was a day of abstinence, and the number seven appears in the sabbatical year and the year of jubilee; in these the motives were economic.

word sabbath means simply 'cessation' from work. This characteristic feature of the day is not explained by the theory of astral origin.

When certain numbers, as three, four, seven, twelve, came to be prominent and familiar, they would naturally be employed in late historical and theological constructions and in literary representations. The Babylonian and Egyptian divine triads do not appear as cultic unities in the earliest times. In both countries the collocations of gods at the leading religious centres were of various kinds, and seem to have arisen from political and social unions; a community would adopt all the deities worshipped in its constituent parts, and thus pantheons would be formed. In Assyrian royal inscriptions twelve great gods are commonly invoked; a divine triad rarely appears in Babylonian or Assyrian inscriptions; the Egyptian triadic and enneadic constructions are more definite.¹⁴ These combinations arise naturally out of the social conditions. Anu, Bel, and Ea may represent sky, earth, and sea, but these characters do not involve scientific astral origins; and the same thing is to be said of Ra, Amon, Thoth, Osiris, and other Egyptian gods. Early Babylonian poems deal with seven spirits, and very late Jewish works recognize seven heavens; in the representation there is nothing that betrays great astronomical knowledge. Psalm 139 refers to the four points of the compass, and Ezekiel's great vision describes four throne-bearers, each with four faces, but neither in the Old Testament nor elsewhere is there any hint that this number is derived from the four "critical points," the two highest and the two lowest, of the moon and sun.¹⁵

The advocates of the panbabylonian theory reject with scorn the supposition of fetichistic and totemistic elements in the development of divine personalities. The gods, they hold, together with their emblems, represent heavenly bodies or the natural phenomena that are dependent on these: the Egyptian

¹⁴ Erman, *Handbook of the Egyptian Religion*, p. 27; Maspero, in *Revue de l'histoire de religions*, 1892; Wiedemann, *Religion of the Ancient Egyptians*, chap. 5.

¹⁵ Jeremias, *Das Alte Testament*, pp. 24 ff.

divine beast-forms are derived from the constellations;¹⁶ the frog and the tortoise represent respectively the male and the female procreative power; "the scarabaeus, according to the Oriental conception, is the representative of the underworld, and thus is the world-bearer, for out of the underworld the worlds arise. Dung is the element of the underworld. The view that the ball in which the beetle lays its egg and which it pushes along was the disc of the sun was a secondary fancy."¹⁷ The question of the origin of gods is too large a one to be discussed here, and a discussion is the less called for because the arguments for the astral origin of the ancient theistic system recently offered are of a vague character; it is presumed that the astronomical facts stated carry with them the demonstration of the theory. Two obvious remarks may be made on the lines of argument of Winckler and Jeremias. The first is that, though they regard astralism as having begun early and passed through a continuous development, they make no serious attempt to define the origin and nature of early theistic conceptions. Jeremias observes¹⁸ that the interest shown in the starry sky by uncivilized peoples is well known, and he cites a couple of recent articles on American mythology; he adds that our knowledge of such peoples is fragmentary, and that it is possible that they have forgotten the astral foundation of their myths and have come to lay the stress on the natural phenomena that are dependent on the heavenly bodies. But—with all respect be it said—this sort of argumentation is a begging of the question. The panbabylonianists cannot afford to neglect early religious history. The second remark—a corollary to the first—is that incidentally and unavoidably they do often assume that natural phenomena have influenced theistic thought. This influence they pass lightly over as something whose basis is astral; but, from the point of view of scientific investigation, it behooves them at least to try to draw the line between astral

¹⁶ Jeremias (op. cit. p. 92, n. 2) remarks that the question why the constellations were given beast-forms belongs to prehistoric times. It might have been well for him to look into this question. Compare Dupuis, *Origine*, i, pp. 117, 131.

¹⁷ Jeremias, *Die Panbabylonisten*, p. 32, n. 2.

¹⁸ *Die Panbabylonisten*, pp. 16 f., 10 f.

and mundane facts, and to show why and how the former in so many cases have, as they hold, been ousted by the latter.

The theory under consideration lays great stress on the relation of secular Periods or Ages to the ancient conception of history. These Ages, which are often named from metals, are determined, it is said, by the position of the equinoctial point in the zodiac, and come in the chronological order: Gemini, Taurus, Aries. They are identified also with the three ruling bodies of the zodiac, the moon, the sun, and Venus, and are named in the order silver, gold, copper, when the moon has precedence, and in the order gold, silver, copper, when the sun has precedence. "The golden age is naturally that of the bright sun; the Romans called it the age of Saturn. This was because the rôle of Saturn was similar to that of the sun."¹⁹ The existing age is that of iron, the astral origin of which is doubtful. The change of astral ages is held to be set forth in various myths; especially at the beginning of any age stands a prominent man having the traits of the astral deity who corresponds to this beginning. As examples Jeremias²⁰ mentions for the Taurus age, with the motif of mysterious origin, Sargon I, Moses, Buddha, Zarathustra, corresponding to the Marduk-Osiris myth; for the Gemini age, Romulus, Cyrus; the Aries motif appears in Alexander, who had himself painted by Apelles as Jupiter. Sargon II, Sennacherib, and other Assyrian and Babylonian kings love to represent themselves as the initiators of a new age, and so prophets, as Elijah and Elisha, are depicted.

So far the theory of Ages, which contains much that is obvious, but also something new. It is true that a great man represents a turn in human history, and, conversely, that a fresh historical departure is commonly the work of a great man or of a group of great men. Around such persons in the course of time legends and myths are likely to gather, and this legendary and mythical material is not invented, but springs naturally out of the ideas of the time in which it originates. All commu-

¹⁹ The gods show great facility in changing their relations to the heavenly bodies; thus Marduk may be the sun or the moon or Jupiter, as the exigencies of the case may require.

²⁰ *Das Alte Testament*, p. 71.

nities like to invest their founders with mystery and wonderfulness. Exactly how the legend of Sargon I arose, the documents do not inform us, but it required no great effort of imagination to conceive that a child was exposed, rescued, and brought up, and became a great king. Such revolutions of fortune were not uncommon in the ancient world. It seems unnecessary to trace the legend to the Taurus equinoctial point and the god Marduk, and there is the further difficulty that it does not appear in the adventures of Marduk, so far as these are now known; "but," says Jeremias, "it was certainly there," his ground being that the general motif is found in the Osiris myth, which is identical with the Marduk myth—the very question at issue. So also Romulus and Remus are twins, and Cyrus and Cambyses, and Harmodius and Aristogeiton, form couples, but for the assertion that their stories arose under the influence of Gemini we desiderate more definite evidence than this fact. Alexander may possibly have taken himself seriously as Jupiter-Amon, but it is equally possible that he accepted the name as an honorary title, or as a compliment to the Egyptians.

The division of the world's history into periods may be explained by man's natural tendency to organize life, by the disposition to distinguish times by their relation to some great personage or some astral or mundane event, and by vague recollections or traditions of the past.²¹ What is not proved is the assertion that the great Ages in the Oriental system were determined by the position of the equinoctial point—follow, that is, the precession of the equinoxes. It is true that secular "ages" were recognized by various ancient peoples, Egyptians, Hindus, Persians, Greeks, Romans—determined sometimes by astronomical observation (as, for example, the Egyptian Sothis-period of 1460 years, the cycle of the heliacal rising of Sothis or Sirius), sometimes by millenniums, taking the number one thousand simply as a convenient round number, as in India and Persia. The gigantic Indian scheme of a succession of cycles, each of 12,000

²¹ Thus we have the ages of Abraham, Confucius, and Pericles, the Augustan, Elizabethan, and Victorian ages, the period of the Reformation, the Romantic period, and the like, and we speak of the "golden age" of some history or movement.

years, is an imaginary construction of the universe from the point of view of mundane development, absorption into Brahma, then a new era, and so on for ever and ever. Neither this scheme nor the Buddhistic series of aeons marked by the appearances of new Buddhas is dependent on astral phenomena. The two questions involved in the astral theory are, first, whether or not all of those issued from Babylonia, and, second, what the religious significance of the systems of Ages is. Those questions have already been touched on, and will be further considered below. For the demonstration of the universality of the astral system and the hegemony of its Babylonian form we desiderate an illustration from some ancient religion, and this Jeremias undertakes to give, in his *Panbabylonisten*, by an examination of the Egyptian cult.²² At the risk of some repetition an outline of his argument may be given.

The Egyptian cult, Jeremias holds, is merely one division of the general Oriental scheme. That Egypt belongs socially to Western Asia is shown by the lively intercourse between it and Babylonia and Canaan, and identity of thought follows social identity.²³ Much has been said about distinguishing between early and late conceptions, but the fact is that the Egyptian religious system appears fully developed in the earliest inscriptions. Like all other cults the Egyptian religion has a fundamental conception—it is the doctrine that the activity of the Deity stands in relation to the starry sky and the parallel natural phenomena (summer and winter, sowing and reaping, cold and heat, day and night). This conception is found in all ancient peoples, and its independent origination in every community is out of the question (the agreement in details is too great to allow such a supposition), but great variations occur in the different local developments, according to the differences in endowments and surroundings among nations. The astral character of the Egyptian religion was recognized long ago, for example by many Greeks, as is reported by Eusebius (*Praep.*

²² He takes his material from Erman's well-known work on the religion of Egypt, but rejects Erman's interpretation of the facts, which is the more generally received one of development from crude beginnings. He rejects also Hommel's attempt to prove by philological methods the identity of the Egyptian and Babylonian cults, preferring to rest his thesis on the similarity of ideas.

²³ Here it is obvious to remark that social identity and identity of thought do not prove borrowing; or, if there be borrowing, they do not show in which direction the borrowing was.

ev. iii.). A striking illustration of this character is found in a pyramid text ²⁴ in which a dead king is said to rise with Orion in the east and descend with it in the west—that is, the dead king is regarded as the incarnation of the Deity who reveals himself in the world, and especially of Osiris. “As Osiris lives,” says another text, “so will he live.” Here, as elsewhere, Osiris has a lunar character; the moon, which after three days bursts forth from the power of the underworld, is the planet of resurrection (the same representation is found in the Babylonian system). The female correspondent to Osiris is Isis, who stands related to the former as Ishtar to Tammuz. In Egypt Sothis (Sirius appears in place of Isis, and Orion in place of Osiris).

The religion of Egypt of the earliest time known to us was influenced by the teaching of the priests of On, where the reigning cult was that of the sun,²⁵ while in Babylon at this time it was on the cult of the moon that the emphasis was laid. This contrast is in agreement with the grandiose conception that earthly lands reflect the heavens, according to which Babylonia bears the character of the upperworld and Egypt that of the underworld,—the full moon represents resurrection, while the sun, at the time of full moon, reaches its lowest point, and becomes an underworld star. The proof that Egypt was so considered is found in the great development of the conception of the future life by the Egyptians, and in the division of Egypt into forty-two districts corresponding to the forty-two judges of the dead (forty-two is the characteristic number of the underworld).

The essential identity of the Babylonian and Egyptian systems (the former being the basis of the latter) appears in the fact that both have the antithesis of light and darkness, with similar cosmogonies (a primeval ocean, for example), in both the sun and moon are twins, and both have divine trinities; in Egypt the trinity is the sun, the moon, and Venus²⁶ (and in the genealogy of the myths we have father, mother, son). Finally, the festivals (the dramatic presentation of dogma) are similar in the two systems (the new-year festival, for example), and all of them are astral.

²⁴ See Spiegelberg's paper in *Orientalische Literaturzeitung*, 1904.

²⁵ This doctrine is termed by Jeremias and others a “mystery.” It was not a mystery, however, in the proper sense of this term; there was no body of initiates and no intention to keep knowledge from outsiders; the fact was simply that the higher thought of the educated, priests and others, was not intelligible to the masses.

²⁶ Jeremias explains that the reason why the heavenly goddess (Hathor = Isis = Venus) is pictured in the form of a cow is that she is the female principle corresponding to the moon-deity represented as a bull. The first station of the moon was in Taurus.

This summary, with its astounding assumptions, gives fairly well the method pursued by Jeremias, which is in all important points that of Winckler. They do not distinguish between the illustrations of similarity in the religions of Egypt and Babylon and the elaborate astralism that is held to underlie all religions. They do not distinguish clearly between astronomy and religion (the fact that the calendar is astral seems to them to prove astralism in their sense), and they do not allow sufficient liberty to the gods to reveal themselves in other things than heavenly bodies.²⁷ They are right in recognizing the religious importance of these bodies, but they have organized the facts into a hard and fast system, with such unrestrained application to minutiae as often leads them into exaggerations and forced and sometimes fantastic interpretations—witness, for example, the thesis, abundantly introduced by Jeremias, that Egypt was regarded in the “system” as representing the underworld and Babylon as representing the upperworld. There is no documentary proof of this opinion; Egypt and Babylon are treated by each other and in the Old Testament simply as political powers, no symbolic values are attached to them. But, according to Winckler and Jeremias, as in the Oriental cosmographic system the North was the region of light and the abode of the gods, so the South was the place of darkness, the abode of the dead, and therefore—such apparently is the reasoning of Jeremias—Babylon as northern and Egypt as southern correspond to the two cosmic worlds. But such a leap from celestial and infernal relations to purely terrestrial is wholly improbable for the ancient times under discussion. Or, if this sort of ratiocination be disowned, then the identification of Egypt (or Sodom) in the Old Testament with the underworld must be regarded as an unfounded fancy.

The significance of the gods and the central points of religious conceptions undergo such kaleidoscopic changes that it is hard to recognize any system in them. Egypt, we are told, was devoted

²⁷ As is remarked above, the part played by natural mundane phenomena is recognized, but these are treated as relatively unimportant adjuncts to the stellar powers.

to the sun, and Babylon to the moon. We might, then, be surprised to learn that the great Egyptian doctrine of resurrection (expressed only feebly, if at all, in Babylon²⁸) was embodied in Osiris, who was the moon; we are, however, relieved by learning that life issuing from death, which is represented by Osiris as moon, is represented also by the overflow of the Nile and by the setting sun; "therefore," it is added, "the unity of the two luminaries and the life of Nature in the eternal cosmic round is represented by Osiris."²⁹ Throughout Jeremias's treatment of the Egyptian doctrine of the future life there is a noteworthy failure to distinguish between the origin of ideas and the forms in which they clothe themselves. The belief that the soul of the dead man goes to the West may have been suggested by the setting of the stars; but this direction of the journey by no means proves that the conception of the future continuance of life arose from the motion of the stars. In ancient times the movement of the soul after death varied with the local conditions of communities; it is not strange that some advanced peoples should have thought the stars to be the abodes of the departed or to indicate their paths to the other world. It is in the view of the future life that the Egyptians differed most strikingly from the Babylonians. There are great similarities in the theistic schemes and the cultic rituals of the two peoples. Both have the usual gods connected with sun and moon and with the arts of life, and the usual apparatus of temples and priests, and in both the gods were originally local and the special prominence of any divinity was due to the political predominance of his home. As is mentioned above, Jeremias agrees with Hommel in holding that the Egyptian religious system was based on or derived from the Babylonian. But, so far from this being the case, the early civilization of Egypt was superior in breadth and depth of religious thought to that of its neighbor and rival. Babylon developed astronomy, and very early (about 2250 B.C.) produced an admirable civil code; but at an equally early date an Egyptian philosopher (Ptahhotep)

²⁸ The restoration of Tammuz to upper earth by Ishtar signifies the re-vivification of nature after the winter decay; but this is not a general doctrine of resurrection, and neither Ishtar nor Tammuz is the moon.

²⁹ *Die Panbabylonisten*, p. 59.

issued an ethical manual which in moral elevation hardly falls below our best standards, and eight centuries later an Egyptian king established a monotheistic cult of a sort never reached in Babylon.³⁰ It is an ungracious task to put one great nation over against another,—the facts just cited are mentioned merely to show the weakness of one side of the panbabylonian theory, namely, its claim of complete religious hegemony for Babylon. Babylon's title to greatness does not need such a pretension. To return to the conception of the future, it is well known that the idea of a moral basis of the future life was current in Egypt from a very early time, while Babylon never advanced beyond the old-semitic conception of the underworld as a sort of death-in-life without ethical sanction or intellectual activity. Semites and Egyptians probably came from the same original stock, but the two races grew by different lines, developing primitive ideas each in its own way; what those primitive ideas were can be learned only from the traces of them in later civilized cults and from the study of the conceptions of the undeveloped communities known to us. The existence of crude traits in the Egyptian and Babylonian cults is certain, and it is no disparagement to these cults, so admirable in their later forms, to refer these traits to early savage social conditions.

It is the alleged similarity between the Egyptian and the Babylonian cults that the panbabylonianists have laid most stress on, but the demonstration of their thesis of an astral unity calls for a comparison of the cults of India, Persia, and China, also with that of Babylon. The general agreements between all these in theistic ritual apparatus are obvious, and need not be described here. The disagreements, however, are no less obvious; the exuberant supernaturalism and metaphysical constructions of India stand in sharp contrast with the neat dualism of Persia, the family organization of the gods in China, and the succession of local divine chiefs in Babylonia. The existence of such disagreements is recognized by Winckler, but he contends that above them is the fundamental belief that the gods reveal themselves in the movements of the heavenly bodies. Doubtless, the stars were and are consulted in these countries,

³⁰ Breasted, *History of Egypt*, pp. 203 ff., 355 ff.

but other things were regarded as more important. The enormous significance attached to sacrifice in India is pointed out in all modern works on the Brahmanic religion; the emphasis laid on the culture of land in the Avesta is obvious, as is the predominance of the worship of ancestors in China. These facts do not accord with the exclusive claims of astralism; they all point to other conceptions. It is true that the cosmological theories of all the ancient nations are intended to explain the origin of things, that they all lay more or less stress on the primeval struggle between light and darkness, and that in all of them a primeval ocean or watery chaos plays a part. This ocean (whence, says Jeremias, divine wisdom, in the person of Ea issues) is independent of the stars. The mountains, rocks, rivers, and trees of the earth, as also the sky considered in itself apart from its content of luminaries, are important elements of ancient religion. That is, the formal part of religion was derived from the whole apparatus of nature. Man is a part of nature, and the gods were made in the likeness of man. But to admit this—and it cannot be denied—is to reject the astral theory in the form in which it is held by Winckler and Jeremias.

Cosmogonies in ancient systems are connected with religious conceptions, but do not give the essence of religion. Myths embody, but do not create, religious beliefs. They are the science of early times, which sought its agents in superhuman Powers, and they thus entered into alliance with the procedures of religion proper. Some myths are stellar, as, for example, the explanation given by an American Indian tribe of the disappearance of the stars by day and of the changing phases of the moon (the stars, they say, children of the sun and the moon, are devoured by their father every morning and are mourned for by their mother, who thus for a time fades gradually away), or the belief that the sun, traversing the sky in a chariot by day, descends into the ocean, passes beneath the earth, and ascends the next day.³¹ In such stories as these the heavenly bodies are clearly the actors; the heavenly gods produce natural phenomena. But no such clear evidence can be adduced for the affirmation that the myths of Osiris and Tammuz are stellar, for these admit

³¹ For other early examples see Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, i, pp. 288 ff., 356.

naturally of other explanations. The expounders of the alleged Oriental "system" content themselves with putting side by side certain astronomical facts and late mythological identifications, by Babylonian or Egyptian priests, of deities with heavenly bodies. But a late learned identification of Tammuz or Osiris with the sun or the moon or some other body tells us nothing of the origin of these gods or of the fundamental religious conceptions underlying their worship. And the panbabylonianists ignore several groups of gods (as those of winds and fire) that are, to say the least, not obviously astral.

Mention has been made above of the importance attached by the astralists to cosmic Ages. If, it is said, these ages be not taken into account, a history of the ancient Orient is inconceivable; the heavenly bodies control the course of the times.³² Every age, it is held, is characterized by the appearance of a saviour, of divine origin, who meets and overcomes the powers of darkness. Now it is true that some ancient nations conceived of the history of the world as moving through secular ages, and this is a fact of interest; but whether, or how far, it had anything to do with the conception of human progress or redemption, or was religiously related to astral conditions, that is a different question. The most definite schemes of ages are found in India and Persia, and these are products of learned construction and non-semitic theological speculation, and are relatively late. The enormous Hindu chronological scheme referred to above, an interminable series of aeons, each of twelve millenniums, exhibits in each aeon a gradual degeneration through its four parts of three millenniums each, and then the reabsorption of the universe into the Supreme Spirit.³³ Here we have the equivalent of the four Greek ages of continuous decadence, with round numbers but no proper zodiacal religious significance,³⁴ with an idea of redemption in this form of absorption. A distincter idea of salvation is involved in the late theory of avatars or incarnations of deities. Occasional incarnations occur in many parts of

³² Jeremias, *Das Alte Testament*, p. 69.

³³ Hopkins, *Religions of India*, pp. 418 ff.

³⁴ The number twelve in this scheme may be connected with zodiacal signs, but not in the way supposed by the astralist theory.

the world; it was natural that a deity should take human form to accomplish something that interested him. Hinduism concentrated its avatars in the person of Vishnu; the number of avatars varied in different schemes (sometimes including even Buddha himself), and was not fixed by astral conditions. Buddhism adopted the avatar conception in its theory of the succession of Buddhas; and the Vishnus and Buddhas had religious significance, they appeared for the purpose of teaching truth and righting wrong. They are illustrations of the general human feeling that things tend to go wrong on earth and need some great force to set them right. The Hindu system of ages is arithmetically grand and symmetrical, and the Persian construction is similarly symmetrical but on a more modest scale.³⁵ The history of the world they comprise in twelve millenniums, divided into four periods; every millennium is under the control of a sign of the zodiac. The first period is that of the spiritual creation—there were no human beings on the earth; the second describes the material creation; the third gives the mythical and legendary history before the appearance of Zoroaster, wherein there is a temporary triumph of Angro-Mainyu; the fourth is ushered in by Zoroaster, and after him come three prophets, the third of whom is Saoshyant, the final saviour and reconstructor. This is an eschatological scheme similar to the Jewish and Christian conception of the End; it is the embodiment of the conviction that the supreme Deity will not give the world over to evil. The coördination of the twelve periods with the signs of the zodiac probably points to Babylonian influence; but it occurs in a late book, and is fitted into an artificial scheme: each zodiacal sign controls 1000 years instead of the 2200 of the precession of the equinoxes; a prophet is assigned to each millennium, not to each period of zodiacal control. Apparently it was only the astronomical fact of twelve zodiacal signs that was borrowed; the religious construction is native Persian. And a similar remark may be made in reference to the Hindu duodecimal system. It was astronomy, not religion, that passed from Babylon eastward.

³⁵ Given in the *Bundahish*, a work regarded by E. W. West as later than the seventh century of our era; comp. Spiegel, *Eranische Alterthumskunde*, i, pp. 502 ff., ii, 151 ff.

The Hindu saviours are deities or Buddhas who appear when there is need of them, without regard to zodiacal periods. The Persian Saoshyant is reserved for the end of the world, a rôle sometimes assigned to the Jewish Messiah; there is only one historical prophet, and he occupies a position like that of Moses, he is said to receive a law from the Deity. These are Aryan religious constructions, based the one on practical monotheism, the other on pantheism, conceptions not found among early Semitic and Egyptian communities, except in the evanescent movement of Amenhotep IV. We look in vain for these eschatological outlooks in Egypt and Babylon. As an example of the "Oriental expectation of a redeemer" Jeremias³⁶ cites one old Egyptian text, the prediction of the sage Epu to the effect that Egypt will be overtaken by a terrible catastrophe, and that there will be great suffering till there arise the Shepherd for all men in whose heart is nothing evil.³⁷ This is simply the anticipation of a clear-sighted statesman and patriot, and has nothing to do with a cosmic Age. He foresees evil and expects deliverance; the "Shepherd" is a king or other great man who will bring order out of chaos and give peace to "all men,"³⁸ that is, to all the people of Egypt; ³⁹ he is beloved by the gods, as all good men are, and he is "divine" in the sense in which the kings of Egypt were divine. For the statement that there was an Egyptian "scheme" of suffering and salvation there is no ground in the documents. There is a similar lack of evidence for a Babylonian dogma of this sort. In the cosmological poems Bel or Marduk conquers the dragon of chaos and elsewhere the mythical Gilgamesh slays the invader Humbaba. In the historical inscriptions any king or his god may be the deliverer of the land from enemies or the conqueror of foreign countries. But all these persons and events arise naturally out of local conditions and temporary needs, and are paralleled in dozens of modern situations.

³⁶ Die Panbabylonisten, p. 49.

³⁷ Taken from Erman, 'Die ägyptische Literatur,' in Die Kultur der Gegenwart, I, 7, pp. 31 f.

³⁸ In a Babylonian inscription (4 Rawl. pls. 32, 33) the king is called "the shepherd of many nations"; see Jastrow, Religion of Babylonia and Assyria, p. 377.

³⁹ Just such predictions the Hebrew prophets make.

Among ancient peoples it was only the Hebrews who developed in a practical way the conception of national deliverance from misfortune by divine interposition. In the Old Testament the expectation of salvation always refers to a definite political situation, protection from some enemy. As a dogma this expectation first appears in the prophets of the eighth century, and is modified from time to time in accordance with the changes in the national life. At first the immediate agent of salvation is the national god Yahweh himself; then, from the sixth century on, attention is fixed on a political head, a king, the instrument of Yahweh, and finally, a supernaturally endowed Messiah is imagined, who is to usher in a new era of national peace and prosperity. In all this process, neither in the prophetic nor in the apocalyptic writings is there reference to zodiacal periods.

The application of the panbabylonian theory to the narrative of the Old Testament is made in detail by Winckler and Jeremias.⁴⁰ In estimating their Biblical work it must be borne in mind that they distinguish on the one hand between the composition of our present Biblical books and the substantial accuracy of their statements, and on the other hand between the historical validity of their cultural pictures and the dress in which they are clothed. They accept the results of the recent criticism of the Pentateuch and the rest of the Old Testament, but claim to look beneath and beyond this criticism to the historical kernel of the narratives; and, as regards the literary dress, they hold that substantial fact is presented under astral forms. Their confidence in the general historical verity of the Old Testament material is based on the accordance of its representations with the known conditions of the times involved, or, as they sometimes put it, on the harmony between those representations and the unitary ancient Oriental lore. Jeremias, further, falls back on his religious feeling; in the Old Testament, he says, the New Testament is concealed, and as Christian he accepts the former,—“the Israelite idea of God

⁴⁰ See Winckler, *Geschichte Israels*, ii, and the first half of Schrader's *Keil-inschriften und das Alte Testament*, ed. 3, and Jeremias's *Das Alte Testament*². The two protagonists differ in some minor points, but agree in fundamentals. See also H. Zimmern, in Schrader, *op. cit.* second half.

and expectation of redemption is not a distillation of human ideas that grew up in various regions of the ancient Orient, but eternal truth in the variegated garment of the Oriental mode of thought, and the forms of this mode of thought belong to a unitary conception of the world which sees in earthly things and events copies of heavenly things that are typically set forth in the pictures and the course of the starry heaven.”⁴¹

We are not concerned here with the discussion of the historical verity of the early narratives of the Old Testament; we have to do only with the astral element in them. The close resemblance between the Biblical and the Babylonian accounts of creation and the flood is generally recognized, however it may be explained. According to one statement of the astralists the former is not borrowed from the latter, but the two give slightly divergent forms of the old Oriental tradition—a view held by many Biblical scholars; the stories in Gen. 1, says Jeremias, are neither sagas nor pallid myths, but a religious application of a conception of the world. There is no mention of a fall of man in the known Babylonian literature, but Jeremias refers to the Babylonian penitential hymns as showing a sense of sin. The myth of Yahweh’s combat with the dragon, which runs through a considerable part of the Old Testament,⁴² is supposed by Jeremias to appear in the curse pronounced against the serpent in Eden, but Winckler regards the passage as relating to the struggle between light and darkness.

The more definitely characteristic side of the astral theory appears in its application to the patriarchal histories and the narratives of the exodus and the conquest. These are interpreted as full of situations and expressions that reflect zodiacal movements and receive their complete illustration from Babylonian and other ancient mythologies.

Winckler’s mode of procedure is based on his general scheme of the origin and interpretation of legends, which is as follows: Legend, he says, takes its material substantially from mythology. The deeds and the traits of the gods are transferred to the hero, the demigod, and thus receive a human coloring; the next step

⁴¹ *Das Alte Testament*², p. vi.

⁴² But it is found only in later writings, in none before the sixth century B.C.

is the saga or folk-story, which completely humanizes the legend, but preserves the air of unreality, and discards definite data of place and time. The legend employs a relatively small mass of material. The same fundamental traits, the "motifs," meet us in varied personal forms all over the world; the same thing is everywhere told of the *genius loci* or the god; every land is a microcosm which includes all myths within its own limits. The Semites, by reason of their inability to conceive things otherwise than objectively, never developed the folk-story. The old Semitic god is a *genius loci*, bound by local conditions, and therefore the pre-islamic mythology of the Semitic peoples could not have been indigenous; the theistic doctrine of their temples, literary and scientific in form, was borrowed from older cultures. It follows that their legends of heroes go back to these older civilizations, such as the immigrants to Canaan came in contact with. The Semitic hero belongs not to nomads but to a settled life; if an Israelite hero appears as a Bedawi sheikh, that is because the people had not lost all memory of their old manner of life. In the settled Israelite civilization two strata of legends must be recognized: those that the immigrants found attached to the soil, dealing with heroes who are copies of local deities (as Abraham domiciled in Hebron, and Isaac in Beersheba), and those that grew up in the land (connected with the judges and the earliest kings). Naturally, the legends attaching to the first stratum will be purely mythological, and those attaching to the second historical; and there is a transitional form (as in the stories of the judges), in which a really historical figure is so overlaid with mythical elements that the details cannot be regarded as historical. Both in these last legends and in the hero-legends historical material may be discerned. The creators of legends are the singers, who at the courts of princes recounted old histories dressed in the mythical forms that were supplied by current tradition. Royal annalists also employed mythical material for the glorification of kings, and later all this mass of quasi-historical material received formal literary and scientific exposition.

So far as this scheme sets forth the general tendency in ancient times to treat national beginnings mythically and to embellish

great personages with legend, it states what is commonly believed. Exception must be taken to certain particulars of the scheme, as well as to the way in which it is applied in the treatment of Hebrew history. The description of legend as always issuing out of mythology is arbitrary; it would have been better to adhere to the usual distinction that myth is imaginative explanation of phenomena, and legend the embellishment or distortion of historical fact. Further, in the criticism of ancient records much depends on the answer to the question whether or not a given figure is a hero in the sense of being a demigod, whether, that is, the stories about him are myth or legend, and here there is room for arbitrary judgment. It is, of course, assumed by Winckler that wherever myth is found it is astral, and thus the door is opened to the widest and wildest comparisons, inferences, and constructions.

For the interpretation of the patriarchal stories not only the Old and New Testaments but also the Talmud and the Koran are freely drawn on; while the Old Testament history, as we have seen, is accepted as substantially true, it is regarded as incomplete and as idealizing; for example, the scene of the proposed sacrifice of Isaac, it is said, was not Moriah but Horeb. Abraham is treated as an ancestor not in an ethnological but in a religious sense; the ancestors are the medium of divine revelation to Israel in the olden time, and he embodies the genesis of the Israelite theistic faith.

“The documents indicate that the beginnings of the religious community that was later called ‘the children of Israel’ are to be found in a migration from Babylonia, from Ur and Harra, where the worship of the moon-god prevailed. Abraham’s forefathers followed this astral religion (Josh. 24 2); he embodies the monotheistic current of the time. It may be surmised that the migration was connected with a reform movement, which brought him into collision with the authorities.⁴³ The migration may have been a protest against the degeneration of the moon-cult, or against polytheism, or against the predominance assigned by Hammurabi to the wor-

⁴³ Jeremias, *Das Alte Testament*, p. 333, n. 1, thinks that the Jewish and Islamic legend of the persecution of Abraham by Nimrod is not a bare fancy but a religious and historical truth, legendary in form and dressed out with mythological motifs.

ship of Marduk. Abraham was a Mahdi; he was guided by God, and he had experience of God. As to the character of his religion, traces of it appear in the divine names mentioned in Genesis. The name Ya'u occurs in Babylonian texts; it is the Old Testament Yah (Jah), and 'Yahweh' is a solemn differentiation (for distinction from the 'heathen' name) which at Sinai became the expression of religious concentration. But the name tells nothing of the conception of God."

As to this statement it may be said that no evidence is cited by the astralists for the view that the Abrahamic migration was determined by religious reform-motives. There is no hint of such motives in the Old Testament or the New Testament or the cuneiform material.⁴⁴ Winckler suggests that the Marduk cult of Hammurabi was a retrogression from the purer religion of Ur,—a conjecture without documentary support and in itself very improbable. Equally improbable is the supposition that the establishment of the supremacy of Marduk at Babylon could drive men from the country. Hammurabi was a polytheist, his religious devotion was catholic, he did not interfere, so far as our records go, with the worship at Ur or with any other worship. If Ya'u was a recognized deity in Babylonia,⁴⁵ Abraham might have worshipped him with impunity. Further, the astralist theory lays too great stress on the supposed monotheistic strain in the thought of the ancient Orient, which thought the leaders of the Abrahamic migration are held to have brought over to Canaan. It is true that there was a tendency to monolatry in this ancient world, especially in Semitic communities; the tendency was a growth out of the old social constitution, in which every group had a special practically all-powerful deity whom it revered on local grounds. This sort of devotion to the local deity is apparent in Babylonia and particularly in Canaan (where the Baals, the divine lords, were numerous) and in Arabia. But, if we except the movement of Amenhotep IV in Egypt, there is no historical record of any ancient Oriental worship that was confined to one god. That Egyptian king seems to have been a religious genius; we have, however, no details of

⁴⁴ The Nimrod legend may be safely ignored.

⁴⁵ This is, to say the least, very doubtful.

his religious experience. His movement did not long survive him. In proof of the statement that the Abrahamic migration brought monotheism into Canaan, we expect it to be shown that the Israelite leaders in continuous line maintained the sole worship of one god. Jeremias affirms that they did so, but he ignores what is said of Jacob's people (Gen. 30 2), of Gideon (Judg. 8 27), of David (1 Sam. 26 19), and others, and fails to notice that the Decalogue does not deny the existence of other gods than Yahweh.

The panbabylonian theory maintains that the astral conception of the world and of religion was known in Canaan and expressed by Israelite writers; that, for example, the patriarchal histories, while containing religious and historical truth, are conceived by the editors of the Pentateuch under astral forms. Winckler weaves his description of these forms into his exposition of the general history; we are not here concerned with his radical transformation of the old history, but have only to note that on the legendary side his object is merely to establish the legendary character of a given occurrence, and not to trace the legend to its origin. He holds that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are *genii locorum*. Each is a precipitate of the *numen* of the place with which he is connected. Abraham, whose original Canaanite locus was in Galilee (whence he was transferred by the Yahwist to the South), is a complete figure; he is one of the Dioscuri (Lot being the other), and he is the brother and consort of Sarai; she is Ishtar, and he is Tammuz-Adonis, and the father of both of them is the moon-god Sin. The proof is that Abraham comes from Ur and Harran, seats of the worship of this god, to whom his two names point; Abram means 'the father (Sin) is exalted,' and Abraham 'the father of a multitude' (Abraham as moon-god, the god of war);⁴⁶ so the moon-god Janus has two faces; his story reflects the myths of Etana and Ishtar's Descent.

Jacob likewise has two characters; in his mythical aspect he is Israel, in his genealogical Jacob. His moon-character appears

⁴⁶ His connection with Beersheba, Winckler holds, 'the well of Sheba,' points to a Canaanite god Sheba, the 'seven-god.'

from various facts: his father-in-law is Laban (the moon); he has twelve sons (the months of the year), and seventy-two descendants from five wives including Joseph's wife; and $72 \times 5 = 360$. His four wives correspond to the four quarters of the moon; Leah, weak-eyed, is the new moon, the beautiful Rachel is the full moon; Leah has seven children (the days of the week), one of them a daughter, Dinah, who is Ishtar (compare the "day of Venus," Friday).

Joseph is a genealogical figure, the representative of the Northern tribes, and as such he is an older creation than Israel, who represents the later unity of all the tribes; as belonging to Shechem he corresponds to the local god of that place, Baalberith (Judg. 9 4). As son of the moon-god, Jacob, he must be the sun-god (the Babylonian Shamash is the son of Sin), and he had therefore to be placed in Egypt, the chief seat of the cult of the sun—his stay in Egypt represents Tammuz in the underworld; his two sons are the two halves of the year, and Jacob's change of hands in Gen. 48 refers to the two reckonings of the year, the older, with the beginning in autumn, and the later, (Babylonian) with the beginning in spring.

It is unnecessary to follow Winckler into his discussion of Moses (Tammuz) and the judges; the method is everywhere the same. There is a wearisome iteration of sun and moon, Tammuz and Ishtar; the discovery of "motifs" usually requires no great ingenuity, but the exposition of the theory as a smoothly rounded whole sometimes calls for violent procedures.

Jeremias, while following Winckler in essentials, lays special stress on zodiacal Ages. Abraham (with Lot), he points out, is the founder of a new era (Gen. 12 3 f.).

"The Oriental historical narration assigns to the introducer of a new era the astral form that represents the beginning of the age. Abram lived in the Marduk age (devoted to the cult of the sun). The religious movement in which he was concerned will have been directed against the reigning cult. The preceding age was that of the moon or Gemini, and for this reason if old Canaanite documents dealt with Abram, they would have been led to introduce

into their narrative moon motifs or Gemini motifs. It must be noted that in this case the critical point is not in spring (as in the Marduk age) but at the solstice. Whether the author of our text understood the allusions is another question; perhaps in his combinatory work many such features were lost. The later Judaism (in the pseudepigrapha and the rabbinical sagas) recognized and revived the doctrine of motifs."

Here various questions occur to us. Marduk, it is true, became the chief god of Babylon, but was there a Marduk age? Were there old Canaanite documents, and were the Pentateuchal editors trained in the lore of ages and eras, equinoxes and solstices? And if certain points escaped them, can we trust the late Jewish writers to give the exact information that their predecessors failed to give. Affirmative answers to these questions are not to be found in the Babylonian and Hebrew documents.

Jeremias goes on to give the astral motifs in detail: 1. In names: Ab-ram, signifying 'the (divine) father is exalted,' points perhaps to a priestly character for Abraham. Sarah corresponds to the title (Sarratu) of the moon-goddess of Harran, and Milkah to an epithet (malkatu) of Ishtar. 2. Moon-motifs: the number 318 (Gen. 14 14) is the number of days in the moon-year in which the moon is visible; Abraham with his 318 companions fights the enemies, as the moon for 318 days fights the darkness. The number thirteen (Gen. 14 4) is lunar; twelve days the moon-year needs to equal it with the sun-year, and the thirteenth day begins the new year. The moon, like Abram, is a wanderer. 3. Gemini (Dioscuri) motif: Abram and Lot (like sun and moon) are the hostile brethren; as beginners of the new (Gemini) age, they show the Gemini motif. But, further (according to the Babylonian doctrine), both moon and sun and also Venus may assume the Tammuz form,—they sink to the underworld and rise to the upperworld. So Abram, cast by Nimrod into the fiery furnace, is rescued. Abram's journey with Sarah to Egypt is represented as a journey to the underworld and rescue therefrom. So Lot is rescued from Sodom, which is here the underworld; he is the sun, his wife the moon, both leave the lower world. Tammuz corresponds

also to Orion, which comes up in the summer solstice and goes below in the winter solstice,—so Abram and Jacob.

The story of Joseph is represented as sparkling with astralistic material; the kernel of the biography is true, but not the particulars,—the situation corresponds to Egyptian manners and history, but it does not follow that Joseph is an historical figure or that the particular incidents mentioned in Genesis ever occurred. He is himself saved and becomes a saviour, and therefore his history is framed in Tammuz motifs: 1. The sun, the moon, and eleven stars (the eleven constellations of the zodiac) do him homage; ⁴⁷ so Tammuz represents the course of the world through the zodiac, and before him sun, moon, and the eleven bow. 2. Joseph is thrown into the pit in the Southland and into prison in Egypt; Tammuz, as evening-star, sinks into the abyss of ocean. To this motif are attached also the baker and the butler; they correspond to the two ministers of Marduk-Adapa. 3. Joseph's coat has the same Hebrew name as that of Tamar (2 Sam. 13 18 f.), and this Tamar has the Ishtar character. Jacob's mourning corresponds to the mourning of Tammuz. 4. Potiphar's wife takes revenge on Joseph as Ishtar brings sorrow on her lovers. 5. Joseph marries a daughter of the priest of the sun-god, and Tammuz receives the daughter of the sun as reward for service rendered. 6. The blessing bestowed on Joseph in Gen. 49 22 f. contains the Bull-Marduk motif. 7. The twelve sons correspond to the twelve signs of the zodiac, or, more exactly, to the twelve months of the year. Benjamin, as twelfth, has the five epagomenal days, and therefore he receives five garments of honor and five times as much food as his brothers.

The blessings of the twelve sons of Jacob (Gen. 49) are said to refer to the signs of the zodiac: Judah is clearly related to Leo, and in Deut. 33 17 Joseph is a bull; Simeon and Levi form a pair (Dioscouri) and slay a man as Gilgamesh and Eabani slay Humbaba—their sign is Gemini; for Virgo Dinah may be taken.

⁴⁷ Why only eleven? asks Jeremias,—because one is hid behind the sun, or did they reckon only eleven? This question only the Hebrew writer could answer, and perhaps not even he.

For the others Jeremias is hard put to it, but struggles bravely through the list: thus, Benjamin is a wolf, and Lupus is south of Scorpio; Asher yields royal dainties, and fish is a royal dainty, etc.

Moses is the saviour of the people from Egypt; the rescue is equivalent to a victory over the dragon. The inaugurator of a new period is provided with definite motifs that are either connected with the traditional accounts of his life or attached as embellishments, or invested with mystery in names, numbers, and paronomasias. So with Moses: 1. His origin is mysterious; the names of his parents are not given in Ex. 21, and Ex. 6 20 is an addition of the late priestly document; in Deut. 33 9 he is fatherless and motherless, like Melchizedek in Heb. 7 3, and so Elijah is described in the Talmudic tract Berakoth, 58a. 2. He is persecuted by a dragon (Pharaoh), and is exposed and saved in a vessel—so Sargon I, Abraham in late Jewish legend, Hathor, Osiris, Zeus, Cyrus, etc. 3. As Ishtar loves and saves Tammuz, so the Egyptian princess had compassion on the babe Moses and saved him. 4. The name Moses is perhaps Egyptian, but, considered as Hebrew, it signifies 'he who draws,' that is, as the story of Sargon indicates, the drawer of water, the gardener; and behind the person rescued stands Ea, the 'drawer of water,' the world-gardener (comp. Gen. 3, Yahweh as gardener). And, it may be added, as to the wilderness sanctuary, the ultimate origin of its title 'place of meeting' is the Oriental conception of the heavenly, or rather earthly, sanctuary in which the gods meet to determine fates.

For other such details we must refer to the writings of Winckler and Jeremias. The sort of ratiocination assumed by the latter writer is illustrated by his above-mentioned treatment of the name Moses. By the scribe of Ex. 2 10 this name was supposed to mean 'drawn out'; that is, he took it to be a Hebrew past-participial form, which is impossible. The earlier constructors of history, those who conceived Moses under mythical forms, understood the name, so Jeremias holds, to be of the

form of the Hebrew active participle; they were ignorant of its Egyptian origin, but they were so imbued with the Oriental mythical method of writing history that they could present Moses as a congeries of mythical motifs. This combination of ignorance and culture at such a time appears improbable.

Considered as an explanation of mythical forms, astralism must be judged by the principles of mythological science; its one-sided character, from this point of view, is referred to above. Considered as an exposition of Biblical personages and incidents, it is unscientific in that it provides no adequate canons of criticism, and in most cases leaves the play of fancy unchecked.⁴⁸ That the Canaanite religion resembled the Babylonian is universally admitted; that certain parts of the Hebrew religious material were derived from Babylonia is probable. The sun-god was worshipped at Bethshemesh; the name of the moon-god Sin appears perhaps in Sinai. The Old Testament cosmogonic material, including the contest of Yahweh with the dragon, is most naturally to be referred to Babylonia, though it may possibly be Old-Semitic lore. The story of Samson may contain solar myths, though this supposition is not necessary; his name points merely to the existence of a cult of the sun in Israel.⁴⁹ The character of Yahweh may have been developed in part through Babylonian and Assyrian influence. But all this is far from giving warrant for a thorough-going astralizing of Biblical stories.

Even if the theory in question were established, its value for religious history proper would be small. The demonstration of the unity of all myths and of their derivation from the stars would, indeed, be an interesting contribution to mythological science, but would leave the core of religion untouched. In fact the expounders of the theory do not make a serious examination of a single element of religious faith. They assume for the pre-historic time a belief in monotheism and immortality; they do not inquire how this belief arose, how it was developed, and

⁴⁸ A parallel is the allegorical hermeneutic applied by the Alexandrian grammarians to Homer and by Christian writers to the Old Testament.

⁴⁹ Such a cult seems to have continued long; see 2 Kgs. 21 5, 23 11, Ezek. 6 4, Job 31 26.

what effect it had on national and individual life. Babylonian thought is represented as the creator of the doctrine of bodily resurrection, which was never held by Semites till they came under Aryan influence. Conceptions of the gods, which must lie back of all myths, are left unaccounted for. The human demand for a saviour is brought into connection not with religious experience but with astronomy. For a fair estimate of astralism it must be borne in mind that it is simply a theory of the origin of myths.

The last remark applies, of course, to the treatment of the Old Testament by Winckler and Jeremias. Astralism is limited in its scope (besides being unscientific in its methods), but it is something more—it is positively hostile to the understanding of the Bible. The most noteworthy features of the Old-Israelite religious development are the sureness with which it moves and the way in which it springs from the national fortunes or the experiences of individuals. As we pass from Amos and Hosea to Jeremiah and his successors, and then to the psalmists and sages, we are aware of a natural advance of thought. Everything is wrought out by reflection in a simple human way, and we have before us the picture of a highly endowed people building up in successive generations a religious system destined to become one of the great achievements of the human race. The astral theory tends to turn the attention from this impressive spectacle and fix it on details that, if they were real, would have the value only of antique curiosities. The stories of Abraham and Moses as they stand exhibit human experience and have human interest,—they are dehumanized when they are made into reflections of the adventures of Tammuz and Ishtar. Even when a true religious fact is recognized by the theory—as the fact that Israel looked for salvation from its God—it is clothed in so bizarre a costume of extravagant mythical fancy that it fades into a dogma of the “Ancient Oriental Lore” and has no power to kindle the imagination or give comfort to the soul.